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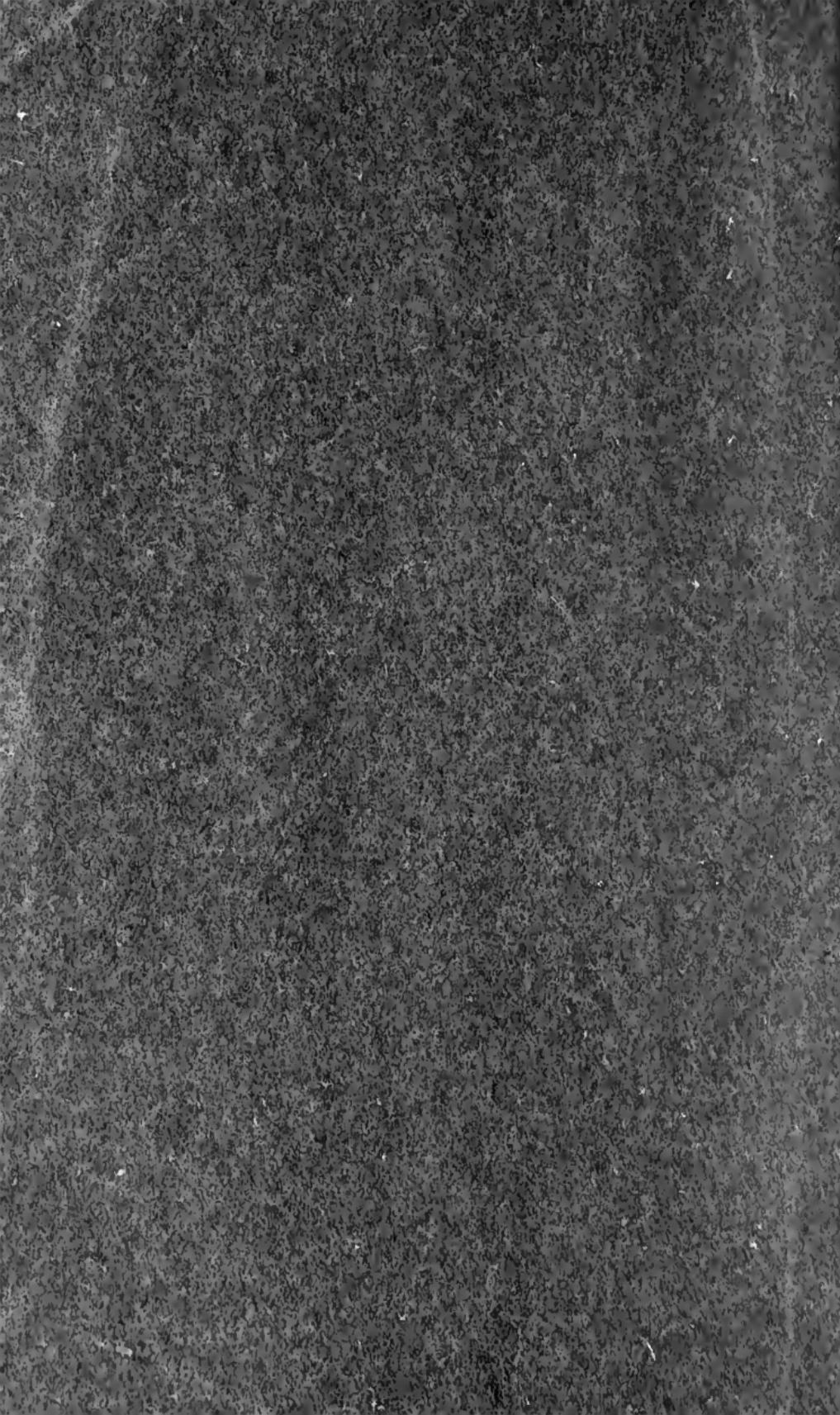
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G. Morris
December, 1912.
With mother's love

THE RIVER
AND
OTHER VERSES

THE RIVER

AND

OTHER VERSES

BY

E. C. MORRICE



MELBOURNE:
AUSTRALASIAN AUTHORS' AGENCY
1912

Acknowledgment

The Author's acknowledgments are due to the proprietors of the following papers, who have kindly given permission to reprint verses that have previously been printed in their columns:—

“Sydney Mail,”
“Town and Country Journal,”
“Sydney Morning Herald,”
“Goulburn Herald,”
“Wollondilly Press,”
“Band of Mercy Advocate,”
Etc., etc.

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The River

In the springtime, when the wattles
 All their golden glory strewed,
Where the North wind, soft and faithless,
 With his kiss their blossoms wooed,
Then the River, bright and tranquil,
 Flowed with silver-rippling tide
Past the town and ever onward
 Till it reached the ocean wide.

Here the joys of life ran riot
 By the river's mazy ways,
Youth and age, and merry childhood,
 Revelled in those vernal days.
Wedding-bells pealed o'er the water,
 Music gay and sounds of glee
Came across the sparkling river
 In those days of jubilee.

When the night crept o'er the ranges,
 Blotting out the sunset gleam,
Myriad lights from happy households
 Glittered on the placid stream;

THE RIVER

And when all was steeped in slumber,
And the Cross shone out on high,
Then the river to the sheoaks
Sang a tender lullaby.

From the arid West now summer
Came, and all the gardens sweet,
All the fruitful fields and pastures,
Shrivelled in the scorching heat;
Plaintively the river murmured,
Shrunken from its lordly flow,
Hazy were the skies at noontide,
Red at eve with fiery glow.

But when sultry days were waning,
Glacier-like the storm clouds came,
From their gloomy caverns flashing
Lurid streaks, and sheets of flame.
O'er the dark'ning earth went sweeping
Warningly, a long-drawn sigh,
And the thund'rous tempest loosened
Smote the land with raging cry.

Then up from the seas the South wind
Drove with gusts and floods of rain

THE RIVER

O'er their banks the waters rising
Overflowed the sodden plain ;
And upon that town the river,
Roaring in the midnight gloom,
Bringing death, and swift destruction
Came with unrelenting doom.

Now no longer by the river
Smiles the gay and busy town,
Where it stood are swamps and marshes
Overgrown with rushes brown.
Here the joy-bells ring no longer,
But the startled plover cries,
And the sad and eerie curlew
Wails beneath the lonely skies.

But at midnight, if you listen,
By that river cold and bright,
You may hear the dirges chanted
Softly, sadly, through the night ;
You may hear a sound of mourning
Through the reeds and rushes sere,
And a slow and solemn tolling
In those river marshes drear.

Old Wallaroo

The evening of my life has come,
The few friends I have known
Are scattered far and wide, and I,
An old man, am alone.
Yet still through all the changeful years
One steadfast friend and true
Has ever shared my roving life,
My horse, Old Wallaroo.

When journeying over desert wastes
In Never-Never lands,
With nought in sight but earth and sky,
Across the burning sands;
The last drop in my water-bag
We've shared, for well I knew
Together we should live or die,
My faithful Wallaroo.

Full many joys we two have known,
That ne'er will come again;
We've chased wild cattle in the scrub
And brumbies on the plain;

OLD WALLAROO

We've won a stockman's race, we've worn
With pride the ribbon blue
For rides and jumps at country shows,
My staunch old Wallaroo.

We've gone a-droving on the roads,
And camped on flat and hill,
In feast or famine, shine or rain,
We've stuck together still;
'Mid flood and fire and hostile blacks
You've safely brought me through,
And many a time have saved my life,
My brave old Wallaroo.

Now we are old, and like to spend
Our life in easy ways,
He dozes in the sun, I smoke
And dream of bygone days;
But when our last great journey comes,
Ah, may it be that you
And I together cross that bourne,
My dear old Wallaroo!

The Bunyip

In lonely swamps, where through the night
The widowed curlew cries,
Where wings the hoarse-voiced cranes, and where
The mopoke's voice replies ;
Where through the ooze and slimy reeds
The deadly adder glides,
Heard, but unseen, a mystery.
The ghostly bunyip hides.

His mighty, roaring voice resounds
Through tangled bush and brake,
The drovers hear it in their camp,
The dusky natives quake,
As crouching in their gunyah's shade,
With trembling lips they pray
The evil spirit to pass by,
And spare them on his way.

At times a legend strange is heard
How 'neath the waning moon
Some wand'rer saw a grisly shape
Rise from the dark lagoon ;

THE BUNYIP

But all such records fanciful
Are fairy tales, I ween.
No mortal eye from age to age
The bunyip's form has seen.

Is he a friend or foe to man,
Malignant or benign?
Or does he, doomed to solitude,
For vanished comrades pine?
A freak of prehistoric days,
When proudly he might reign
O'er creatures weird that swam the stream
Or sported on the plain?

Or is he but a spectral voice,
Devoid of life and form,
Like to the banshee wailing in
The raging midnight storm?
It is not known, but on some day
Perchance that it may be
Some strong and clear-eyed brain may solve
The bunyip's mystery.

In every human heart there dwells
Some secret, unknown power,

THE BUNYIP

We hear at times its mighty voice
Rise in a thrilling hour.
Is it malevolent or kind,
Destined for weal or woe
To shape our lives? Heaven grant us strength
And vision clear, to know.

The Charm of the Bush

Oh! bushlands wild and lonely
When sick with worldly care
I turn to you, and only
Find peace and comfort there,
Where fragrant gum-trees rustle
Their gracious hymn of praise,
Far from the roar and bustle
Of crowded city ways.

Down where the ripples shimmer
The whispering oaks among,
And where the tea-trees glisten
Resounds the thrushes' song,
And where the waters dreaming
Reflect cerulean skies,
A flash of sapphire gleaming
The swift kingfisher flies.

Here are the fairy bowers
Where wild clematis sweet,
Its creamy petals showers
Before my straying feet.

THE CHARM OF THE BUSH

And here, in purple glory,
Sarsaparilla twines
Around a box-tree hoary
Her slight and graceful vines.

A-down the gully leaping
The silvery cascades fall,
'Mid palm and fern-trees sweeping
The mocking lyre-birds call,
The wonga-wonga's cooing
Comes softly through the trees,
Where sly mimosas wooing
Is murmuring low the breeze.

How wond'rous are the changes
All through that summer day,
When over distant ranges
The light and shadows play;
Cool greys at dawn, warm blushings
Rose-red at sunrise bright,
Noon's golden haze, pink flushings
In evening's crimson light.

Then as the last faint glowing
Fades over western woods,

THE CHARM OF THE BUSH

Comes moonlight overflowing
These silent solitudes.
Mysterious shadows darken,
And where the night-winds roam,
To solemn songs I hearken
Within the leafy dome.

Oh! bushlands, calm and holy,
Beneath your arches wide,
I learn with spirit lowly
How small is human pride;
And from your leafy portals
I come with broader mind
To join my fellow-mortals
And mingle with my kind.

The Harvesting Horses

Oh! brave is the soldier's horse that brings
His rider into war,
When the shrapnel shrieks, and bullet sings,
And cannon booms afar;
With trembling nostril, fiery eye,
And wildly tossing mane,
Though riderless, at bugle-call
He breasts the fight again.

Oh! grand is the racer as he leads
The field amid the roar
Of a thousand voices, when he needs
Nor spur, nor whip-lash more
To make him win the prize that day,
As past the post he flies,
A thing of beauty and of pride,
The joy of many eyes.

But more than gallant battle-steed,
Or sportsman's joy, I hold
In honour supreme that friend in need
Who in those fields of gold,

THE HARVESTING HORSES

The yellow wheatfields, works for man
With meek and patient toil,
To gather in the precious grain,
The bounty of the soil.

Oh! not for glory, and not for play,
But for our daily bread,
Those harvesting horses strive all day,
From dawn till evening red.
And well I love those sturdy teams
As one by one they come,
All glorified by sunset glow,
To bring the Harvest Home.

On the Plains

Away, away, across the sunny plains,

The dewdrops glisten on the waving grass,
Our curb-chains jingle as we touch the reins,
The morning breezes greet us as we pass.

No hills to break the illimitable views,

No trees, alone the frosted salt-bush grows,
The gleaming tanks reflect the heavens blue,
A silv'ry streak the distant river flows.

Along the line where earth and heaven meet

Like carded wool the fleecy cloudlets lie,
Far in the south a flock of emus fleet
Move like black specks against the pearly sky.

The browsing flocks are scattered far and near,

And solitude reigns o'er these levels grey.
We are alone, dear love, with none to hear
The farewell words that part our lives to-day.

Let us forget that sorrow lurks behind,

Let us forget the lonely days to be.

ON THE PLAINS

This day is ours, for once the fates are kind,
Let us enjoy our short-lived ecstasy.

Away, away, out-riding pain and grief.
Our horses' hoofs with rhythmic music ring.
Let us rejoice, although our joy be brief,
To share these hours whate'er the future bring.

Women Workers

A heritage of work is theirs,
For, since remotest ages past,
Have not the women ever toiled
Where'er their lot in life was cast?
The high-born lady of the hall
In tapestry fair legends wove.
The cottage maiden turned her wheel,
And spinning sang her songs of love.
Their sphere was narrow, but their hands
Were diligent in household ways,
And still-room, pantry, linen chests
Bore witness to their busy days.

But now they have a wider scope,
And, foremost in the stir and strife,
Shoulder to shoulder with the men
The women face the fight of life.
For daily bread, for fame, or power,
For love of science or of art,
With pen or brush, or sculptor's tools,
Man's rival throngs the crowded mart.

WOMEN WORKERS

She tends the sick, she trains the young,
Her voice is heard in public hall.
To right the wrongs that mar our world
Her challenge rings with trumpet call.

Yet think not woman's broader ways
And greater knowledge will despise
The claims of motherhood and wife,
The care that in the household lies.
For ever this her perfect work
Will be, though not on all bestowed.
Some fail, and others tread alone,
With yearning soul, their barren road.
Oh, lonely ones, there may be found
Congenial tasks for you, that lie
Beside your door, where little feet
Of homeless waifs are straying by.

And far from strenuous life of town,
The outback woman, brave and strong,
Toils with her man to make a home.
Nor spares herself the whole day long.
Here, with work-hardened hands, she rears
Her children, who, a sturdy band
Of young Australians, well may prove
A safeguard to their native land.

WOMEN WORKERS

And many gifted ones have come
From out that forest-nurtured race
To take among the various calls
For brain and hand a worthy place.

Thus in the surge of cities, or
The solitude of bush and plain,
For weal or woe, still women's work
A mighty factor shall remain.
Ah! if from every rank of life
United women could believe
That power for good lies in their grasp,
What noble deeds they might achieve.
Perchance some day will realise
Long cherished hopes, when she who reigns
Beneficent o'er hearts and homes
May raise the world to higher planes.

The Legend of the Pleiades

(Aboriginal)

In the days long since departed,
On the summer meadows bright,
Wandered seven beauteous sisters
Seeking yams from morn till night.
But the cockatoos had eaten
All the roots upon the plain,
And the seven little maidens
Wandered far and sought in vain,
Feared to come home empty-handed
When the shades of evening came,
For they knew Schingal, the Emu,
Sore would beat them, to their shame.
Then they wept and cried, "Bäme,
Great, Ancestral Spirit, hear,
Help your little friendless daughters,
For they call in trembling fear."
Then Bäme, the great spirit,
Looked and saw the lovely maids,

THE LEGEND OF THE PLEIADES

Said, " Their eyes are like Girala*
Shining in the midnight shades,
Soon their beauty will have faded,
Soon they will be weak and old,
Left alone to die of hunger,
Or to perish in the cold.
will take them to my heavens,
Make each one a sparkling star,
There, where glow the red Karambeel**
They shall shed their light afar."
And Bäme, in his pity
Sent a whirlwind from on high,
And it caught the seven sisters,
Swept them up into the sky.
There at night we see them shining,
Veiled in soft and lustrous haze,
Bright Wanggatti, the sweet sisters
Bringing back the springtide days.

* Stars. ** Aldebaran.

The Passing of Summer

Summer is passing, ripe with fulfilment,
Weary with ruins of many a joy,
Deep in our heart its golden remembrance
Time and departure can never destroy.

Summer is passing. Hark to the dirges
Murmured by swamp-oaks, where brown waters
gleam.

List to that throstle, Autumn's precursor,
Warbling its greetings to woodland and stream.

Summer, thou hast been gracious to many,
Cruel to others, with varying mood.
Oft has thou vexed us, often delighted,
Lavish with evil, as bounteous with good.

Now, at thy parting, only thy sweetness,
And thy enchantment remain in our mind,
As when a friend at whom we have cavilled,
Leaves us, and only his virtues we find.

Dewladen mornings, when from the river
Rang the reed-warbler's melodious refrain;
Crimson-flushed evenings, when o'er the ranges
Rumbled the thunder with promising rain;

THE PASSING OF SUMMER

Sunflooded noon, when perfume of gum leaves
Filled the hot air, and the brushwood was still,
Save for some drowsy lilt of a magpie,
Or for the silver-eye's elfin-voiced trill.

Oh! and the nights in rose-scented gardens,
Love strayed enraptured 'neath star-silvered skies,
While great Canopus glowed high in the heavens,
And through the palms swept mysterious sighs.
All this, and more, in thoughts we may treasure,
As slowly fading thou paskest from sight.
And if thy harshness we should remember,
Deem it a lesson, and read it aright.

Farewell, O Summer, all thou hast brought us
Soon will be merged in the dim long ago.
When thou returnest, how shall we find thee—
Coming in friendship, or else as a foe?
We shall be ready, unawed by mishance.
Welcoming thee as in shimmering haze,
Over the violet crests of the mountains,
Comes the enchantress with fate-laden days.

The Egrets

High in the red-gum's leafy crown
The egrets build their home,
Amid the rippling greenery,
Like flakes of milky foam.
Their mother-birds upon their nest
In innocence and sweetness rest,
Rain-drenched or tempest-tossed, they cling
To their young brood with shelt'ring wing.

Ah! Nature may be ruthless,
But with more relentless hand
Man sends death-dealing messengers
Across the peaceful land.
Are those white blooms of wind-swept flowers,
Or falls of snow in summer hours?
Alas! beneath a smiling sky
God's fairest creatures slaughtered lie.

These denizens of wood and mere
For greed and folly died,
To satisfy man's avarice
And pleasure woman's pride.

THE EGRETS

Can tender-hearted women wear
These ravished spoils upon her hair,
Nor realise their caprice brings
A cruel doom to harmless things?

My sisters, could you but behold
The wanton misery
Inflicted on these lovely birds
Whose plumes so thoughtlessly
You flaunt, and hear in helpless pain
The starving nestlings cry in vain.
Those egrettes proudly worn to-night
Would grow abhorrent to your sight.

A gentle queen, whom we revere,
Has shown us how to stay
The fiat of destruction sent
Forth under fashion's sway.
Then let us follow her, and fling
From us these rifled crests that bring,
Unless our will the fates control,
The stain of cruelty on our soul.

The Southern Cross

Far o'er the Southern ranges when the night
Her star-gemmed mantle spreads o'er land and sea,
The jewelled Cross shines out in majesty
Among the hosts of heaven, serene and bright.
Oh! emblem of a love supreme, whose light
Should guide our steps through life's mysterious ways,
Whene'er to thee our troubled eyes we raise,
Teach us to choose the path that leads aright.
Cross of the South! How joyfully we greet
Thy welcome stars above the ocean's rim,
When homeward bound, their radiance pure and clear
Awakes hope, beloved ones to meet,
Our pulses throb, and tears our visions dim,
For thou art linked with all that life holds dear.

Our Country

Can it be true that we Australians know
Not love of country? That our hearts are cold
To that home-spell which these bright shores enfold,
And that we are too ready to bestow
Our light affections on strange lands? Oh, no!
It cannot be; thy children still do hold
Thee dear, my country, and with spirit bold
And ready arm would meet the invading foe.
We love thy harbour shores, thy azure hills,
Thy woods primeval, and thy boundless plains,
The golden waters of thy mountain rills,
Thy Alpine ranges, where the snow-king reigns,
Thou art our land, which all our pulses thrills,
Not e'en thy rugged wastes our heart disdains.

To the Evening Star

Star of the Evening, rising o'er the deep,
Beyond the long roll of Australian seas.
When over harbour shores a fragrant breeze
From summer gardens come, and white sails sweep
To sheltered havens. On this headland steep
In former times perhaps some dusky chief
Might see the rise beyond the coral reef,
Before the white man roused him from his sleep,
And brought him gifts that drove him to his doom.
Oh! gentle star, in past and present days.
Thy radiancy illumined twilight's gloom.
Like faithful Love, who sheds her cheering rays
O'er youth and age, and lights us to the tomb,
A lamp from heaven to guide our darkened ways.

Autumn Days

The last bright days of Autumn are welcome to my soul,
Ere over skies cerulean the wintry storm-clouds roll.
Warm are the sun's caresses like some dear friend's farewell,
And of December's gladness the wand'ring breezes tell.

In Autumn's wind-swept gardens pale flowers, white and red,
Still bloom; but, ah! their sisters in fields and woods are dead.
No more the blue lobelia peeps from the waving grass,
The pink-tipped heath no longer sheds fragrance as I pass.

Where late the wild clematis a summer palace made
Dead leaves and withered petals lie heaped within the shade,
And where the wattles quiver above the sparkling creek
The native bee may vainly for honeyed blossoms seek.

AUTUMN DAYS

The speckled diamond sparrow, the wren with azure crest,
No longer trill and twitter above their fairy nest;
But through the hazy bushlands, and on the hillside lone,
The weird goburra's laughter still rings with mocking tone.

Oh, full of tender sadness are these last Autumn days,
The past and future mingling beneath their short-lived rays,
For summer's golden mem'ries yet seem to linger here,
Already overshadowed by winter drawing near.

Remember the Toilers

Oh, maiden, in thy youthful prime,
That view'st thy mirrored form entranced
Decked with the spoils of many a cline,
Thy beauty by their charms enhanced,
Pause for a moment ere thou pass
To where thy social triumphs wait.
And, gazing in the flatt'ring glass,
Remember those less blest by fate,
Whose toil makes thee so fair.

That silken gown that round thee gleams
Its fabric woven in distant lands,
While thou wert wrapped in happy dreams,
Was wrought for thee by weary hands.
A barren livelihood to gain,
The flowers that thou dost wear to-night,
With many a sigh of want and pain,
Were fashioned delicate and bright
To twine among thy hair.

Oh, mother, clasping to thy heart
Thy bright-eyed baby boy, whose smile

REMEMBER THE TOILERS

Such perfect gladness can impart,
'Mid thy caresses pause awhile
And think of mothers toiling hard
To give their hungry children bread,
Whose tenderness knows no reward
Save this, to see them clothed and fed,
Toil without hope of rest.

Warm is thy darling's nursery,
And strewn with many gaudy toys,
Made in far lands across the sea
By little toiling girls and boys.
His laugh is music to thine ear.
But, ah! the low and plaintive wail
Of other babes thou dost not hear,
Rocked by their mothers, wan and pale,
Upon her shiv'ring breast.

Oh, happy maids and mothers, think
Sometimes of those who toil and strive
To keep with work from which you shrink
Perchance those dear to them alive;
Give from the time in pleasure spent
A fragment to the toiling poor.
And with the gifts by Fortune sent,
The struggling workers at your door
Relieve as seemeth best.

An Australian Girl's Letter

I am writing this scrawl of a letter

In a hurry before I go out,
To tell you I never felt better.

And to ask how you got through the drought?
To say that I always remember

The dear home 'neath Australia's bright sky,
And that moonlight night in September
When we plighted our troth, you and I.

We've been to the Palace and Tower,

Done the Abbey, the Temple, St. Paul's,
At Goodwood were caught in a shower,

And have danced at the notable balls.
I think it is all very jolly;

You should just see the frocks that I wear,
But (this is a secret) your Polly
Keeps on wishing that you could be there.

And now for that rumour unfounded

Of Sir Freddie that came on to you,
Believe me, your fears are not grounded,
Though we're parted I'll ever be true.

AN AUSTRALIAN GIRL'S LETTER

The family think I am crazy,
And declare his intentions are clear;
For my part I think they are hazy,
But I'd never accept him, my dear.

For were he a perfect Apollo
Not a feeling he ever could move;
My own inclinations I'll follow,
And they lead to the one that I love.
Good-bye, now, the motor car's ready,
We are off for a spin in the "Row,"
And here, oh, of course, is Sir Freddie,
But he's perfectly harmless, you know.

I long for the plains where the cattle,
Ah! those happy things, wander at will,
For rides through the scrub where the wattle
The warm air with fragrance doth fill.
I long for the realisation
Of the dream that has brightened our life,
That some day to your Queensland station
You will bring me, dear boy, as your wife.

The Selector's Boy

He is a smartish little lad,
Gets up at break of day,
And milks the cows and feeds the pigs,
And helps to make the hay.

He knows a fat beast from a lean,
With one glance of his eye
Can spot a stranger sheep among
Our flock when passing by.

He's not a new chum on a horse,
Barebacked it's all the same.
Buckjumpin' is a lark to him,
Jim knows that little game.

Goes to a school? Well, yes, you see,
He's only ten years old.
He goes about four days a week.
That's all they ask, I'm told.

Book-learnin' only never keeps
Starvation from the door.
I reckon many a tramp I've met
That had it, and was poor.

THE SELECTOR'S BOY

I learn my boys a good day's work,
And as for little Jim,
He ain't no duffer, you jest try,
You can't get over him.

Mailboy Jim's Ride

As over the scrub rose the ruddy-faced moon,
He strapped on his bags for the township of Doon.
"Bail up, or we shoot;" To the saddle he sprang.
The bullets whizzed past him, the shots round him rang.

He turned, waved his hand in derision and glee,
"Now forward and gallop, my chestnut," said he.
Urged on by his rider's encouraging shout,
With long swinging gallop the chestnut struck out.
Over shadowy track, through brushwood and brake,
The clattering hoof-beats dull echoes awake.
Wings over them wailing the curlew her flight,
The warrigal follows them far through the night,
And fast in the rear come the bushrangers grim—
Now ride for your life, little mail-carrier, Jim.

Before them the river all silver-topped lies,
The starry Cross southward hangs low in the skies,
Foam-flecked is the chestnut, his sides pant and steam
As downward he dashes to plunge in the stream.
He crosses the river, he sweeps o'er the plain,
The morning breeze freshens, the stars pale and wane.

MAILBOY JIM'S RIDE

The kangaroo starts from the dew-spangled grass,
The wild, snorting cattle rush off as they pass.
Gasps fiercely the horse, and his pace grows more
slack.

Yet still the pursuers come fast on his track,
Red glows the bright East, and now rises the sun.
"Hold up, my good chestnut, the race is near won."

• • • • •
"What's this?" "Who comes here?" In the town-
ship of Doon

The people turned out on that sunny forenoon,
To stare at a travel-stained rider and horse
Coming down that old road at so headlong a course.
"Three cheers for the rider, three cheers for the
steed,

That saved the Queen's mails by their pluck and their
speed,"

But Jim patted his horse and made laughing reply,
"We've done but our duty, my chestnut and I."

The Last of His Tribe

He stood on the hill when sunset's gleam
Shed golden splendour on wood and stream,
And saw where the stranger's busy hand
Had cleared the forests, and tilled the land.
By that wood and stream in days of old
He had been a chief and hunter bold,
Had tracked the wallaby through the brake,
And had speared the fish in moonlit lake.
But lagoons were dry, and the scrub was bare,
And the white man now reigned everywhere.

He had led his men to fight one day
Where now that prosperous township lay,
And where the arching bridge now arose
Had vanquished and slain his dark-skinned foes.
Now fair-haired children played on the shore
Where the camp-fires blazed in days of yore;
And river steamers went churning by
With smoke-wreaths veiling the ev'ning sky,
While he who once called these lands his own
Now wandered an outcast and alone.

THE LAST OF HIS TRIBE

The last of the tribe, his hair was white,
Uncertain his step and dim his sight,
And his heart long buried in the grave
With his lubras and his warriors brave.
The light had faded from hill and dale,
And sounds were hushed in the twilight vale.
As night stole out of the shadows deep
The aged chieftain sank down to sleep,
And passed to the amaranthine plain
To join his dusky tribesmen again.

The Bushranger

A clear cut shadow at its feet
The giant rock hangs o'er the way,
And brooding in the noon-tide heat
The tangled scrub lies dull and grey.

The stringy-bark ridge wrapped in haze
Looms dimly on the sultry sky,
And glitt'ring in the scorching rays
The distant flat spreads brown and dry.

No sound the forest silence breaks,
No song of birds, nor stir of breeze,
No breath the purple blossom shakes
That hang in clusters from the trees.

His arm around his faithful steed,
His hand on his revolver laid,
(His only trusty friends in need),
He stands and slumbers in the shade.

Low on the horse's mane his head,
He snatches thus a short repose,

THE BUSHRANGER

A hunted outlaw, fierce with dread,
From dewy dawn to evening's close.

Hark! is not that the warning sound
Of horses' hoofs in measured beat?
The sleeper starts and stares around,
Then leaps into his saddle seat.

Up and away—yes, danger's near,
Approaching sounds the silence break,
And every sound is fraught with fear
When life and freedom are at stake.

The dust whirls up, the light grows pale,
Fast fades the rider's flying form,
The thund'ring hoof-beats faint and fail,
Like echoes of a dying storm.

Silence returns, in voiceless heat
The bushland sleeps all dull and grey
A length'ning shadow at its feet.
The giant rock hangs o'er the way.

The Bushman's Child

Along the hill the sturdy boy,
With small, bare feet, comes down,
A picture of unfettered joy.
His cheeks are ruddy brown,
His laughing eyes of liquid blue
Reflect the sky's cerulean hue,
And on his warm young brow the hair
Hangs loose in crisping ringlets fair.

His playmates are the parrots bright,
The bounding wallaby,
The chatt'ring 'possum that by night
Leaps down from tree to tree.
He knows their voices far and near,
The woodland's child, he feels no fear,
His mimic stockwhip in his hand,
No king is prouder in the land.

His father's hut peeps out among
The golden wattle trees,
And here are heard the magpie's song,
The murmur of the breeze,

THE BUSHMAN'S CHILD

The splashing of the water-fall,
The distant lyre-bird's wooing call,
The little creek that bubbles low,
Where musk and myrtle bushes grow.

Oh! happy child, far from the din,
 The toiling care and strife,
That pale the cheek of childhood in
 The city's crowded life.
Sweet Nature's nursling, may'st thou grow
 The worth of Nature's gifts to know,
And bear with ready hand and heart
 In manhood's life a worthy part.

A Reminiscence

Here is the spot, here let us camp,
The creek sings low, the wattles sigh,
And from the distant, misty swamp
Resounds the curlew's mournful cry.
Turn loose the horses, let them graze,
Now by the firelight's ruddy glow
Let me recall departed days,
With all their charms of long ago.

This is the place, ten years have past,
And chance has brought us back once more
To where my lot in life was cast
For short-lived joy in time of yore.
The fire burns bright. Dark shadows play
Around us with the leaping flames
Like ghosts of that long-vanished day
Whose thoughts to-night remembrance claims.

Old man, two faithful mates we've been
Through many reckless years of life,
Handfast, in many a boisterous scene,
Alike in luck, or want and strife.

A REMINISCENCE

My time is drawing to its end,
Yet ere I go I'd like to tell
This yarn to you, my only friend,
Of one I loved, God knows how well!

It seemed this eve I saw her stand
As when her form first met my eyes,
A wattle blossom in her hand,
Her sweet face flushed with shy surprise.
All day I'd ridden far and wide,
Through tangled scrub, o'er breezy down,
And drew my rein at eventide
Besides these waters golden brown.

She stood amid this wattle-grove.
The sunset on her gleaming hair,
A winsome creature, made for love,
With starry eyes and visage fair.
What matter though her life were rough?
Should I her humble birth despise?
We loved—ah! was not that enough
To make these wilds a paradise?

Disowned by all my kith and kin,
What was their ancient name to me?

A REMINISCENCE

I could not deem my love a sin
In this bright land of liberty.
I weary you? It boots not now
To tell you how I loved—and lost.
I scarce remember why or how
Her father's will our wishes crossed.

The springtide wattles were in bloom
When first we met, we met to part
Beneath a sky whose wintry gloom
Matched well the anguish of each heart.
To-night it all comes back again:
Her clinging arms, her sobbing tones,
The sullen clouds, the driving rain,
The breeze that through the swamp-oaks moans.

Her grave is far from here. That site
Marked by a hearthstone bare and cold,
Still shows, if I remember right,
Where stood the little hut of old.
That dream is o'er. But by the grace
Of her true love, when life is past
Perchance that I may see her face,
And find abiding peace at last.

Transcendental Love

Shall sweet love but mortal be,
Love that fills our soul and mind,
Purest, rarest of its kind,
With the glow of sympathy?

Such a love so deep and true
Comes but once on life's rough way,
And its incandescent ray
Falls but on the favoured few.

As the Gueber's sacred fire,
From mysterious darkness born,
In the desert waste forlorn
Holy rapture can inspire.

Thus in lives most desolate
Love, mysterious and unsought,
With entrancing rapture fraught,
Brightens e'en the darkest fate.

Sin and sorrow, want and pain,
Cannot quench such wond'rous love.

TRANSCENDENTAL LOVE

Steadfast as the stars above,
Through all life it will remain.

Shall such love but mortal be?
Shall it not all time transcend,
There where soul with soul may blend,
In the vast Eternity?

Black Barney

(An Old Settler's Yarn.)

You want to know whose grave this is, the grassy
mound you see,

Fenced round in this deserted spot beneath a wattle
tree?

Well, 'tis a longish time ago, but while your horse
you spell,

Just light your pipe, and if you like to hear, my yarn
I'll tell.

The blacks we know are dying out, and little loss
'twill be,

But years ago they swarmed around, wild as the
wallaby.

As savage as the dingo, sir, ready to steal and slay,
They led us settlers such a life, no rest by night or
day!

They speared our horses, cattle, sheep, and if they
got a chance

They murdered many a white man, too, with boome-
rang or lance.

BLACK BARNEY

But, mind you, if you caught one young, and reared
him from a child,
He could be fond, and faithful, too. that black so
fierce and wild.
My father had a black boy once, and Barney was his
name,
We found him in the scrub one day; I'll tell you
how it came.
You see the blacks had done a raid, and killed the
overseer
Of Gunyah station, and we whites were gathered far
and near.

We hunted them from break of day until the sun set
red.
'Twas glorious sport! Like kangaroos before our
guins they fled.
Yes, sir, for that one murdered white a score of
blacks we slew,
And only stopped when coming dusk could hide them
from our view.
I was only a stripling boy, and should have stayed
at home.
My mother wished this, but my dad was willing I
should come.

BLACK BARNEY

For hard I begged to be allowed to go and join the
chase,
But now I think in that day's work we boys were out
of place.

When all was o'er and night came on, we homeward
rode again,

Then in the scrub, close to my feet, I heard a cry of
pain.

A wail as of a native bear, and yet a human sound;
My blood ran cold, I stopped my horse and leapt
down on the ground.

A dark-skinned baby there it lay, half dead with
thirst and fright.

Where some poor lubra, mad with fear, had left it in
her flight.

Well, sir, we took the urchin home, and brought him
up to be

A useful, trusty lad, and now he lies beneath this
tree.

Black Barney used to follow me wherever I might go,
When I had come to be a man and he a lad, you know.
If I should live a hundred years I'll not forget the
day

That we were searching for some stock in gullies
far away.

BLACK BARNEY

Barney and I we rode alone, we hunted up and down
The river banks, and all along the ridges bare and
brown.

'Twas summer time, the sun was hot. I said we'd
camp some hours

Beside a waterfall whose spray came down in spark-
ling showers.

I dozed awhile and Barney watched, a faithful chap
was he—

Yes, sir, that is his grave beneath this golden wattle
tree.

Then all at once I heard him cry, "Wake up, black-
fella come!"

I started up, sprang on my horse, and made a dash for
home,

For down the gulley's rocky sides, with hate and
vengeance flushed,

A horde of yelling, black-skinned fiends with flashing
weapons rushed.

We spurred our horses up the steep and stony moun-
tain tracks,

We rode for life, but fast behind came on those fleet-
limbed blacks.

BLACK BARNEY

At last we gained the level land, we thought the danger o'er,

But now my horse, done up with toil, fell down to rise no more.

Then, like a pack of yelping hounds, we heard that savage cry.

"All up with me, ride on," I said. "Oh, what a death to die!"

But Barney from his saddle sprang, said he, "My pony strong,

You take him, ride for life, massa, him bear you safe along."

I thought of my young wife at home, my little girl, our joy.

I was a married white man; he—was but a dark-skinned boy.

"God bless you, Barney, I'll bring help," I answered.
"Quickly, hide!"

Again those yells, some hissing spears. By George, that was a ride!

And Barney? Well, I brought the help, as promised, but too late.

Poor fellow, brave and faithful, he deserved a better fate.

BLACK BARNEY

When we arrived the blacks had fled, but pierced with
many a wound,

Yet with a smile upon his face, poor Barney there we
found.

Yes, he was dead. We buried him beneath the tree
that day.

A black boy only, still he was a hero in his way.

The Drover's Christmas Eve

The camp fire burns low and the night winds are sighing

Like message from home, through the myalls they sweep.

And wrapped in deep slumber the drovers are lying

But one, who is watching while others may sleep.
His pipe for a solace, alertly he listens

For stir 'mong the cattle, whose outlines are dim.
They graze where the star-spangled rivulet glistens,
The first lonely watch of the night falls to him.

All day on the dust-clouded road, hot and weary,

His slow-moving mob he has plodded along,
Enliv'ning the course of that journey so dreary,

With yarns of old days, or the snatch of a song.
But now that the dew-laden night has descended
To cool the parched earth that her mantle enshrouds,
His dull work-day thoughts with bright fancies are blended

Like golden flushed sunset on shadowy clouds.

THE DROVER'S CHRISTMAS EVE

The full moon now rises above the dark ranges,
Where lies the far home of the drover to-night,
That home which through all life's wild tossings and
changes
Has been his one haven of peace and delight.
He knows that this evening his loved ones are yearn-
ing
To greet him to-morrow, their Christmas to share,
But wide must he wander ere homeward returning;
He sees those dear faces who wait for him there.

But hark! What is that? 'Tis a rush of the cattle;
Their thundering hoof-beats the trembling earth
shake!
The horses have started, their hobble-chains rattle.
The dogs leap up barking, the sleepers awake.
Dispelled are the Christmas eve visions; the drover
Is up and away; his mates follow apace,
Through thicket and brushwood, with Dandy and
Rover,
To head the wild mob in its panic-struck race.

The camp is deserted; the drover remembers
No more his home dreams on that lone Christmas
eve.

THE DROVER'S CHRISTMAS EVE

Like wraiths of his fancies above the dead embers
The weird, ghostly smoke wreaths fantastic forms
weave;
And faint in the distance the tumult is growing,
The cracking of stockwhips, dull, roaring wild cries.
The moon sheds her glory on clear waters flowing,
On dream-haunted woodlands 'neath calm midnight
skies.

The Hanging Rock, 1891

(On the Great Southern Road.)

For miles the great lone road along
The trackless scrub shuts out the view;
But high the white-stemmed trees among
The azure sky peeps shyly through;
And 'mid the sober grey and green
Whose tints clothe all the belting wold,
The native holly spreads its sheen
Of blossoms, like a cloth of gold.

Unchanging 'neath the changeful skies
The giant rock hangs o'er the way;
From tangled brush its ramparts rise
Like castle ruins old and grey.
From out its riven clefts there grows
Full many a gnarled and twisted tree;
The sweet clematis overflows
Its rugged sides in beauty free.

Far from its height the eye surveys
The winding road beyond the trees,
And ambushed here in olden days
Fierce outlaws lay, till on the breeze

THE HANGING ROCK, 1891

Came sounds of rattling wheels along
The dusty highway, gleaming bright,
And bowling on with joke and song
The Royal Mail dashed into sight.

Then from their rocky fortress broke
The robber band's exulting shout,
And hoarse the thund'rous echoes woke,
As shot on shot rang sharply out.
Up from the shadowy underbrush
The startled curlew wailing rose,
Wild tumult marred the solemn hush
Of solitude's serene repose.

But now the stream of life afar
Has changed its course and turned aside.
And noontide sun and midnight star
Look down on silence deep and wide.
A relic of those ages flown,
The ancient rock frowns dark and high,
And o'er its head the breezes moan
A requiem of the days gone by.

The Butcher Bird

Freebooter bold! Through every note
A clear defiance rings;
The warbling of his sturdy throat
A reckless challenge flings.

High in the wattle's gleaming gold,
Bathed in the morning's rays,
Like some gay troubadour of old,
He sings his roundelay.

A trenchant dagger is his beak,
And in his jealous rage
He stabs the foreign singer meek
That trills in gilded cage.

Then far from the avenger's hand
Triumphant melody
He sends across the springtide land
In tuneful ecstasy.

So fierce he is, and yet his song
With music overflows;

THE BUTCHER BIRD

Free from remorse, or thought of wrong,
As free from human woes.

His carols greet the morning beams,
They welcome in the night;
The very embodiment he seems
Of Nature's wild delight.

For Sydney, 1889

Beauteous city, by the waters of thy sapphire-tinted sea,
Eldest of the five fair cities linked in sisterhood with thee;
Like a queen thou sit'st enthroned by green hills and azure bays;
On thy gardens, domes and towers southern sunlight brightly plays.

I have loved thee when my footsteps mingled with thy stir and strife,
Glad to feel myself a unit in thy mighty, throbbing life.
I have loved thee when at evening, shining on the rippling tide
That their golden glow reflected, myriad lights shone far and wide.

I have loved thee when thy turmoil, like the ocean's distant roar,
Came to me as I sat dreaming where the fig-trees fringe the shore;

FOR SYDNEY, 1889

And when over blushing headlands rosy clad the morning crept,
When adown thy gleaming harbour many stately vessels swept.

When some noble deed and kindly has thy brightest virtues shown,
I have praised thee and exulted as my birthplace thee to own,
Hoping that the good within thee might the lurking evil quell,
Like St. George of ancient legends overcame the dragon fell.

For thou art the pulse whose beatings quicken all our fair, young land;
Thou dost hold thy people's welfare in the hollow of thy hand;
Glorious city, in thy bosom lies the fate of future years,
Blended with thy country's future, with her hopes, her joys, her fears.

The Calling of the Sea

Oft I think the sea is calling,
Sweeping on from shore to shore,
With the crested breakers falling
On the rocks in sullen roar.
Oft where emerald shallows glisten
By mysterious ocean caves,
As of old I seem to listen
To that message of the waves.

Often comes to me the hailing
Of the ships that in the night
Pass each other onward sailing
Over moonlit ripples bright.
And I hear the creak and swinging
Of the rigging as they race
With the tide, and feel the stinging
Of the salt spray on my face.

Often when a storm is beating
On my inland home, I may
In its cry discern a greeting
From the rollers far away,

THE CALLING OF THE SEA

Till it wakes a sudden yearning
With some good ship once again,
Outward bound, or home returning,
To go steering o'er the main.

For to those who once went roaming
O'er the waters wide and free,
Ever from the billows foaming
Comes the calling of the sea;
And her magic is abiding
In the hearts that love to go
With the wild sea-horses riding
When the merry breezes blow.

FRASER & JENKINSON,
PRINTERS,
343-5 QUEEN ST., MELB.

OPINIONS and REVIEWS

...ON...

The River & Other Verses

The addition of "The River" to the list of works of our Australian poets is, indeed, a gratification. The sketches of the vicissitudes incidental to the life in the Bush are artistically given, truly descriptive, highly coloured, and with a heart-stirring swing, which appeals strongly to those who have ever tasted the charm of Australian life.

FRED. D. BADGERY.



EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

"I took it for granted it was a man who wrote them ('The River, and Other Verses'). They are not the ordinary work of a woman; they smack more of the open-air life of a station man with his love of horses. I like the title-page one best of all, but 'Black Barney,' 'Mail-boy's Ride,' and 'Drover's Christmas Eve,' keep cropping up in my mind. They breathe the true spirit of the Bush."



"Stock and Station Journal."

Here is a little book of poems, in a paper cover, a shilling book (a penny extra for postage) issued by the Australasian Authors' Agency, 239 Collins-street, Melbourne. I never heard of that Agency before, but that doesn't say that it isn't an all-right concern.

This booklet consists of about 70 pages of nicely-printed verses, many of which are excellent. I often wonder why people prefer poetry to prose, but it is the primitive form, I suppose, and there will be rhythmic expression as long as the world lasts.

The writer of these verses is E. C. Morrice, and she has a pretty gift of expression, and a wide outlook on life. For instance, the story of "The Selector's Boy" gives you the very atmosphere of the selector's shanty, and the mental outlook of many selectors:—

"Book-learnin' only never keeps
Starvation from the door.

I reckon many a tramp I've met
That had it, and was poor."

And the legendary:—

But all such records fanciful
Are fairy tales, I ween,
No mortal eye from age to age
The bunyip's form has seen.

And the sentimental:—

She stood amid this wattle grove,
The sunset on her gleaming hair,
A winsome creature, made for love,
With starry eyes and visage fair.

Elsewhere one finds some very fair sonnets—which the printers have not known how to “set”—and an invocation to Sydney, “eldest of the five fair cities linked in sisterhood with thee.” There are two frank echoes of Browning and Bret Harte, conscientiously localised:—

I am writing this scrawl of a letter
In a hurry before I go out
To tell you I never felt better,
And to ask how you got through the drought.
I think it is all very jolly;
You should just see the frocks that I wear,
But (this is a secret) your Polly
Keeps on wishing that you could be there.

“Three cheers for the rider, three cheers for the steed,
That saved the Queen's mails by their pluck, and their
speed.”

But Jim patted his horse, and made laughing reply:—
“We've done but our duty, my chestnut and I.”

The verses have been published in various papers, and as an unpretentious shillingsworth they will give pleasure to many.



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